

## **2007–08 Parent Survey District-Level Results for District of Columbia Public Schools**

We wish to thank all the parents/guardians who participated in the 2007–08 DC School Parent Survey for the time and effort they invested in sharing their feedback.

### **Why Was the Survey Conducted?**

In the spring of 2008, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) administered a telephone poll for DCPS parents/guardians. The purpose of the survey was to obtain feedback about how satisfied parents were with school district services, how things were going in the schools, what current needs were, and whether or not these needs were being met. This information will be used for planning and for measuring performance over time. Parents/guardians provided a variety of information, including their overall impressions of school district services and the schools, their current needs and whether or not these needs were being met. The gathered information will be used for planning and measuring performance over time.

### **Who Took the Survey?**

A total of 502 parents/guardians completed the telephone survey. In order to ensure that the DCPS parent survey results were accurate and representative of all parents, Pacific Market Research was contracted to create a stratified random sample on key demographic and geographic characteristics (i.e., ward, race, school type). See Attachment A for additional details. In addition, to uphold the integrity of the sample, participants who were not reached during the initial call received up to ten follow-up calls.

### **What Types of Questions Were Asked?**

Survey questions addressed areas of interest to school stakeholders including DCPS parents, school and central staff. The survey was designed in collaboration with central office departments including the Office of Family & Public engagement and a group of parents who reviewed and edited the content of the survey. Individual survey questions fell into several general categories including:

- Overall satisfaction with DCPS
- Levels of communication with parents
- School instruction and parental engagement
- How well are parents informed of student progress
- Reports of home schedules/routines
- Opportunities for parental participation
- Activities for students
- Identification of most important issues for parents
- Most frequently cited problems with schools
- School safety

For most questions, parents chose from five response options (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, and don't know). Exceptions are noted. In this report, we show the percentage of responses for each question.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### **Demographics**

Of the respondents, 85% spoke English in the home, 11% spoke Spanish, 5% spoke other languages. Seventy-six percent identified their ethnicity as black, 10% identified as Latino, and 7% identified as white. Eighty-two percent were female, 18% were male. The children of 72% or respondents attend school in the same ward in which they live.

### **Overall Satisfaction with DCPS**

Parents/guardians reported the school district and their student's school were on the right track for student achievement. There was slightly higher agreement that the schools were on the right track this year (07-08) compared to last year (06-07). Schools received higher ratings compared to the school district as a whole. Respondents also report being satisfied with school staff.

### **Activities for Students**

Most parents/guardians identified several extra-curricular activities available at schools. They indicated their children had participated in some of these activities and reported they would like their children to participate in more. *Arts or Music Groups* was most commonly available and desired.

### **School Safety**

In terms of school safety, the majority of parents are satisfied with the safety of their child(ren)'s school within the building as well as outside, around the school building.

### **School Maintenance**

Respondents report being generally satisfied with the physical condition of the classrooms, and maintenance of the schools.

### **Levels of Communication with Parents**

Results also indicate that parents felt respected and welcome at schools, were regularly contacted by schools and were generally kept well informed.

### **How Well Are Parents Informed of Student Progress**

Over 80% of parents/guardians strongly agreed it was important to be involved in their child(ren)'s education, knew what their children should be learning, and were informed of their children's grades.

### **Supporting Students at School and at Home**

A majority of parents indicated their child(ren)'s school makes student learning the first priority, provide children with extra help when needed and generally do a good job preparing students for life success. A majority of parents also noted that the schools have helped them support their child(ren)'s education both at home and school.

### **Opportunities for Parental Participation**

Most parents reported several opportunities to participate in the school. Respondents also indicated parent/child classes, computer literacy and programs that help parents/guardians understand the DC public school system would be helpful for guardians.

### **Identification of Most Important Issues for Parents**

*Academics/Student Learning* was overwhelmingly identified as the MOST important issue. *Teachers* and *Safety* were among the top three most important issues.

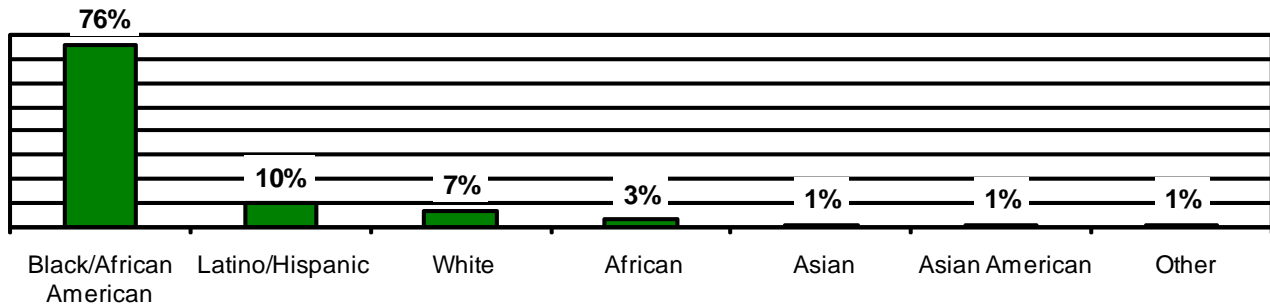
### **Most Frequently Cited Problems with Schools**

Parents/guardians reported the biggest problems facing public schools in their communities were *Lack of financial support/funding*, *Lack of discipline*, & *Concern about standards/quality*.

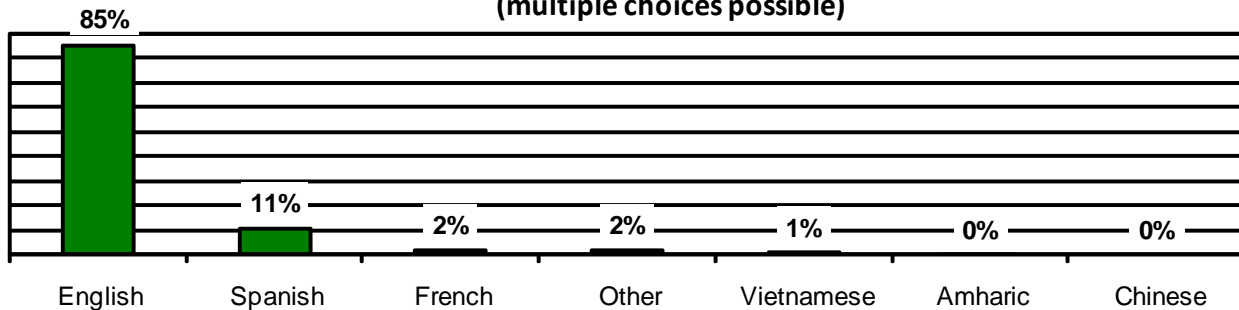
## Demographics

Of the respondents, 88% were parents, 3% were guardians, 6% were grandparents and 3% were other family members. Eighty-two percent were women and 18% were men. The children of 72% of respondents attend school in the same ward in which they live. The majority of respondents were Black/African-American (76%) who speak English in the home (85%). Additional details about respondents are provided in the following tables.

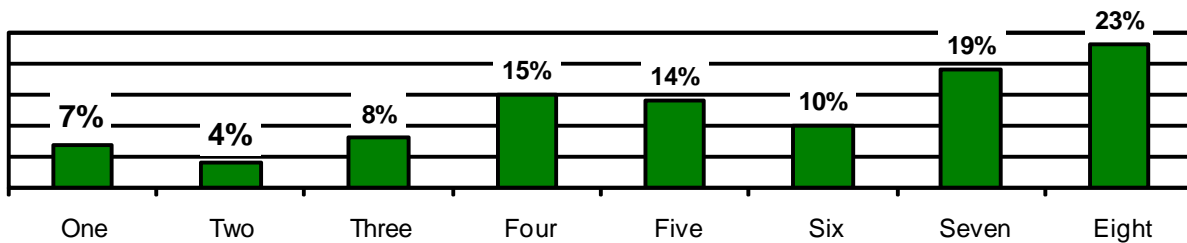
**How would you describe your background?**



**In your household, what languages are spoken?  
(multiple choices possible)**

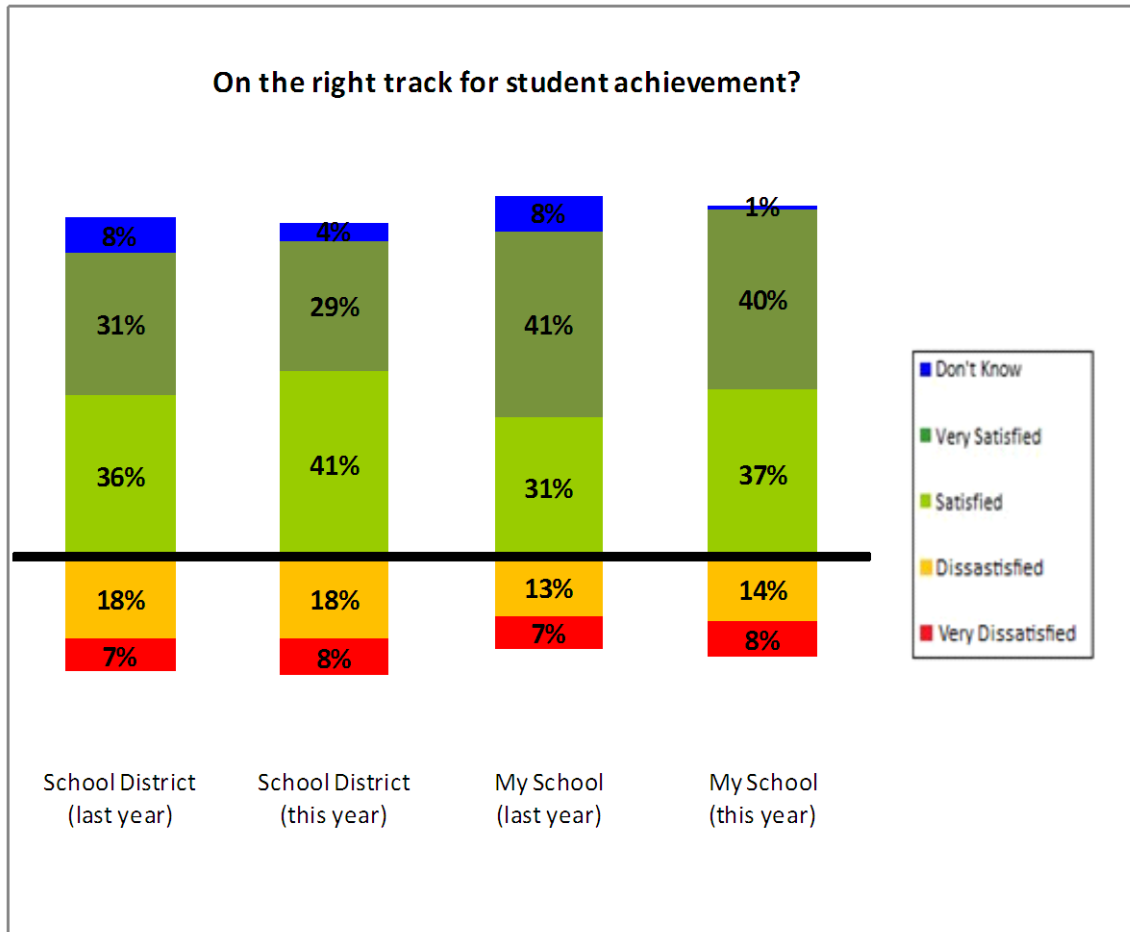


**In which ward do you live?**

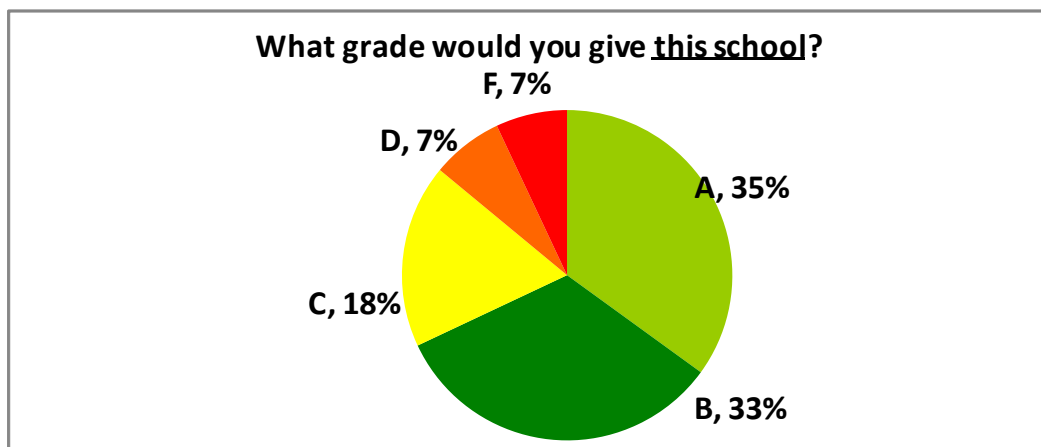
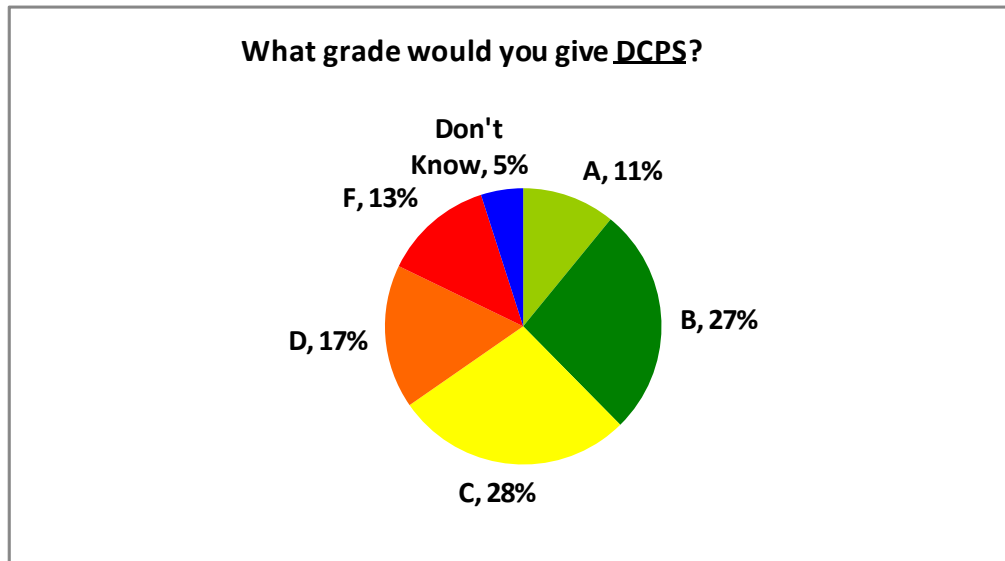
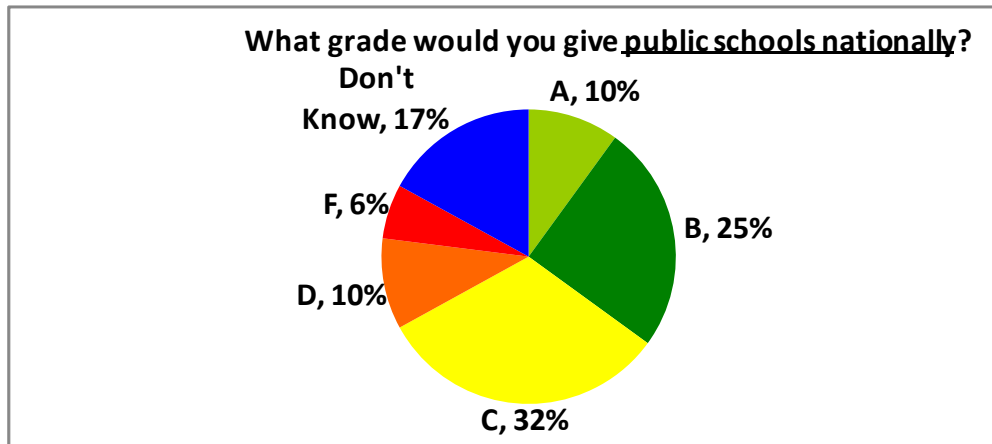


## Leadership

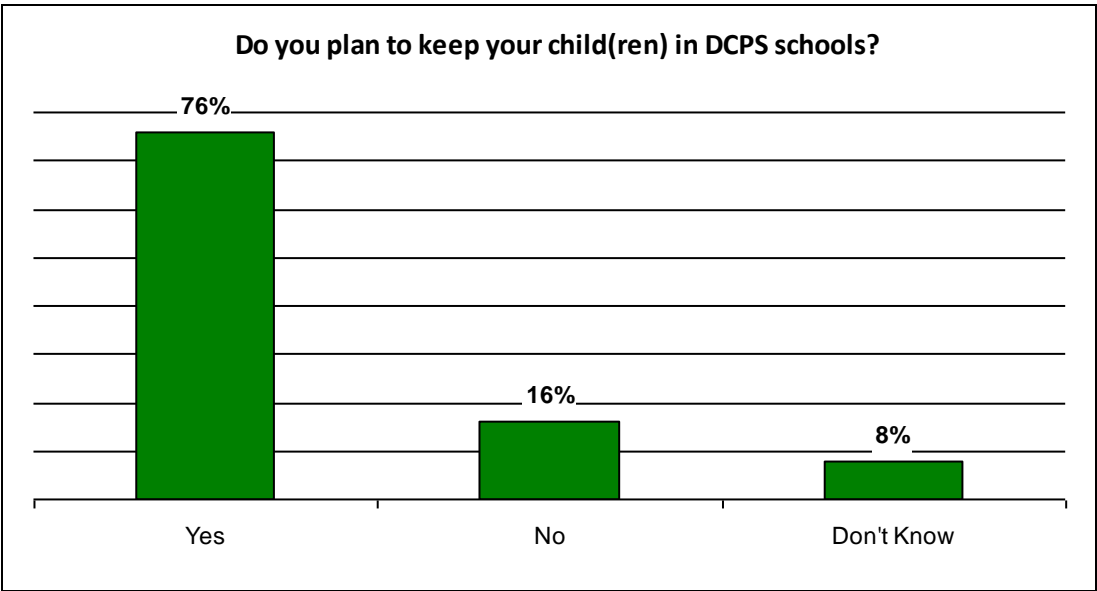
Overall, parents/guardians reported the school district and student's school were on the right track for student achievement. There was slightly higher agreement that the district was on track this year (70%) than last year (67%). Respondents also agreed that schools were more on the right track this year (77%) than last year (72%).



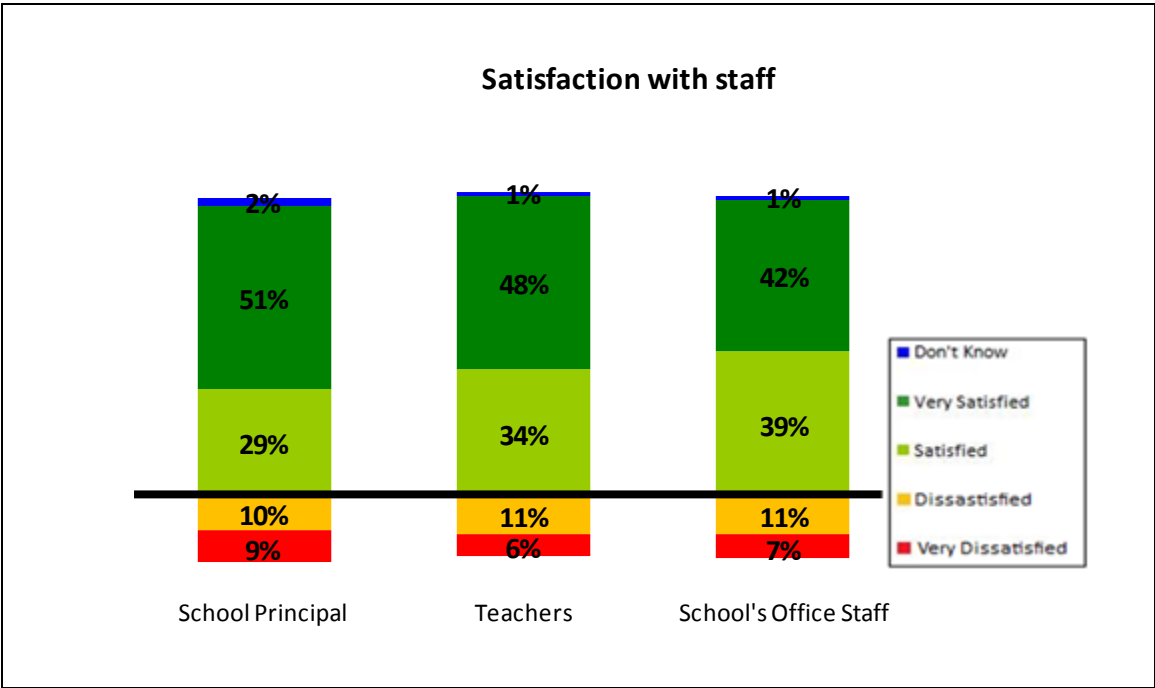
Schools were given higher ratings compared to the school district as a whole both in terms of being on the right track and in terms of grades (Don't Know and A-F) that were assigned by respondents. Generally, respondents graded their children's school with an A or B more frequently (68%) than DCPS, generally (38%).



Additionally, parents/guardians were asked if they plan to keep their child in DC public schools; 76% of parents said *yes*, 16% said *no* and 8% *did not know*.

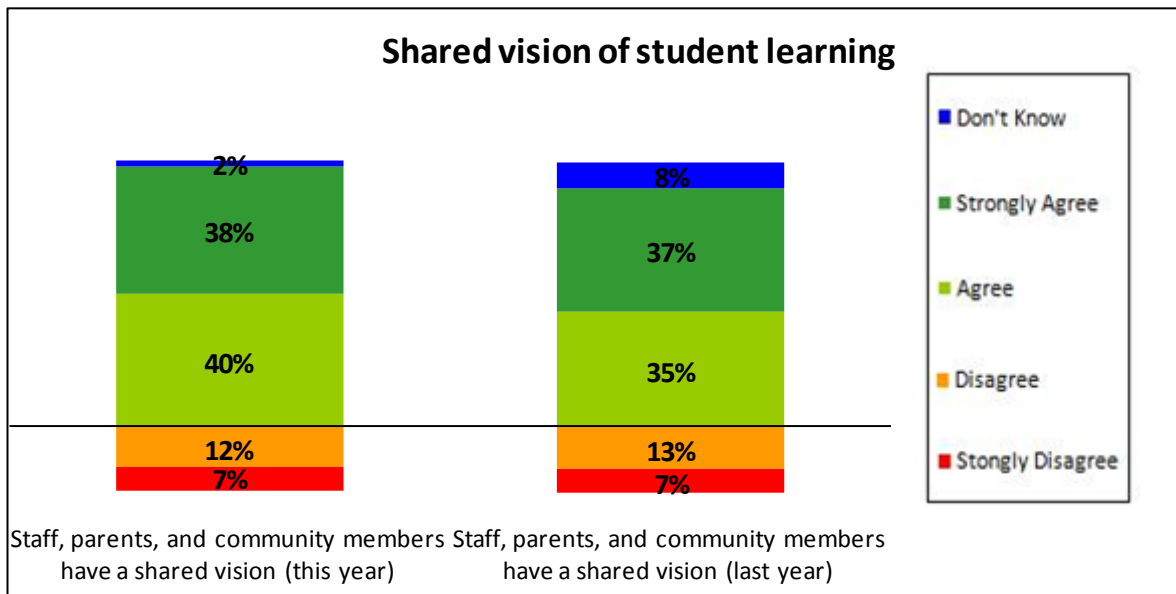
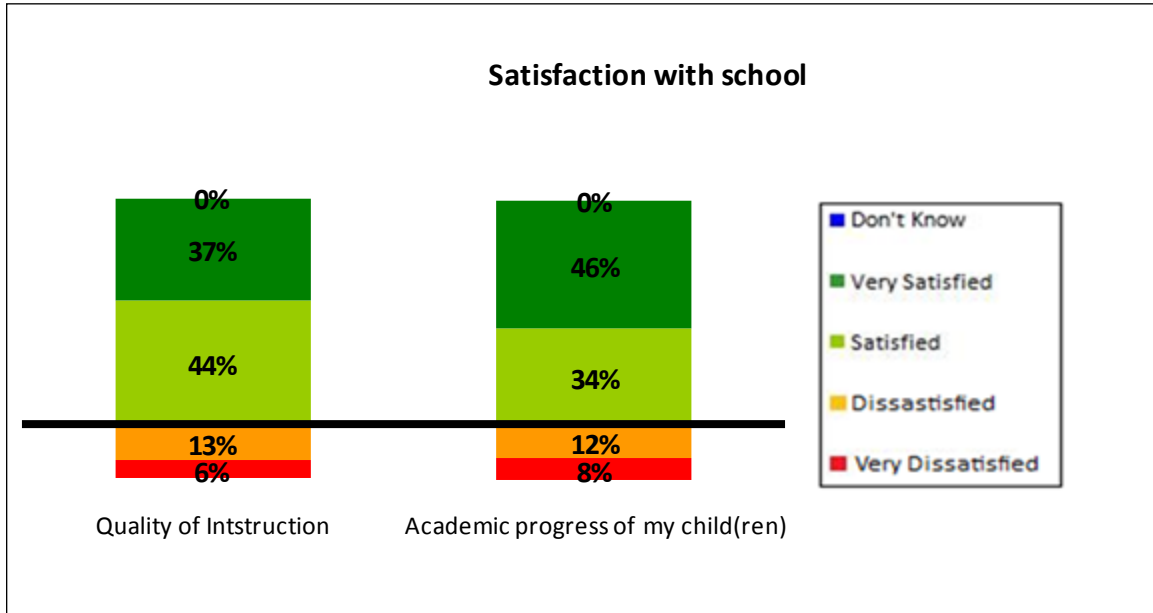


Parents reported being satisfied with the staff at their children’s schools. Respondents were slightly more satisfied with teachers (82%), than with principals (80%)



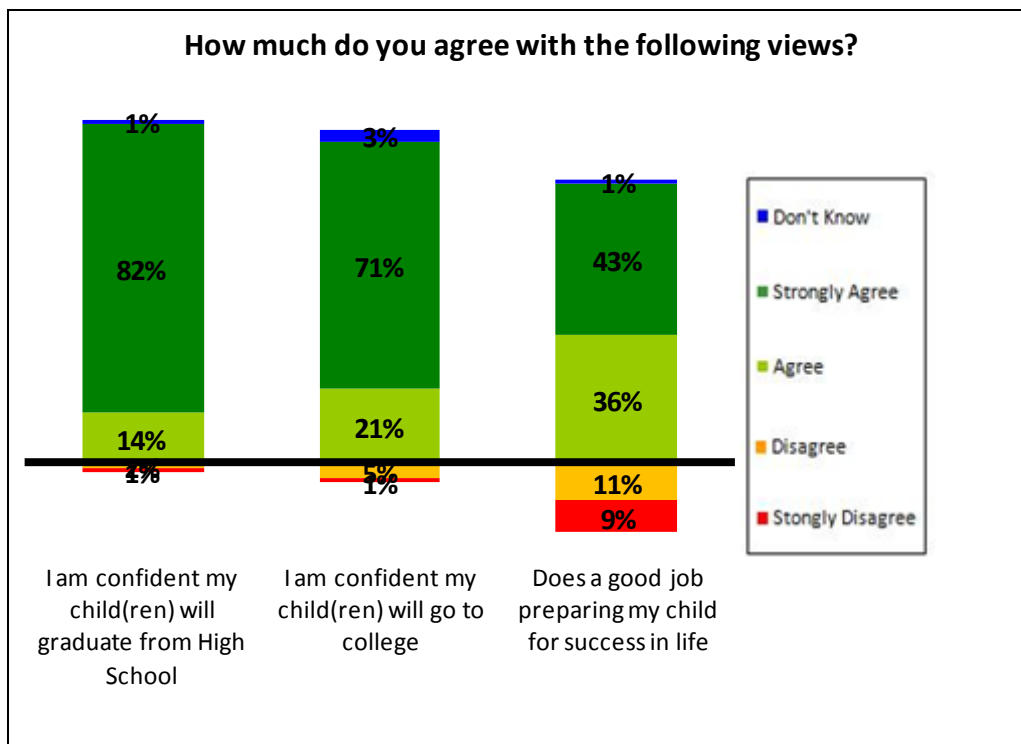
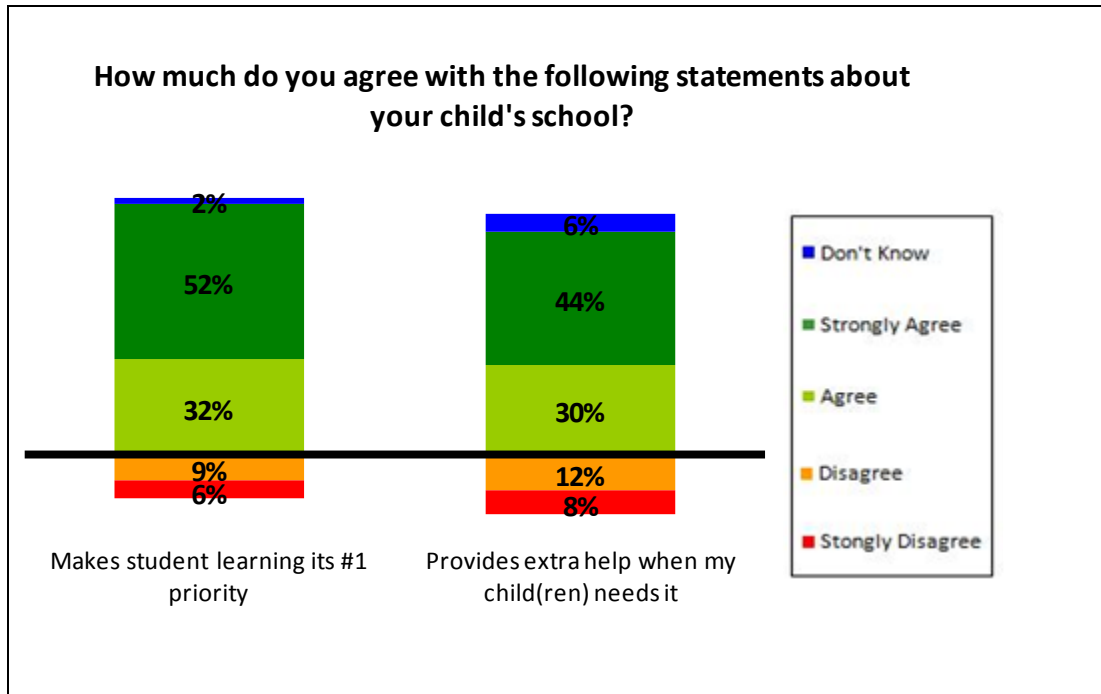
## Teaching and Learning

Most respondents are satisfied with the quality of instruction in the schools (81%) and the academic progress of their children (80%).



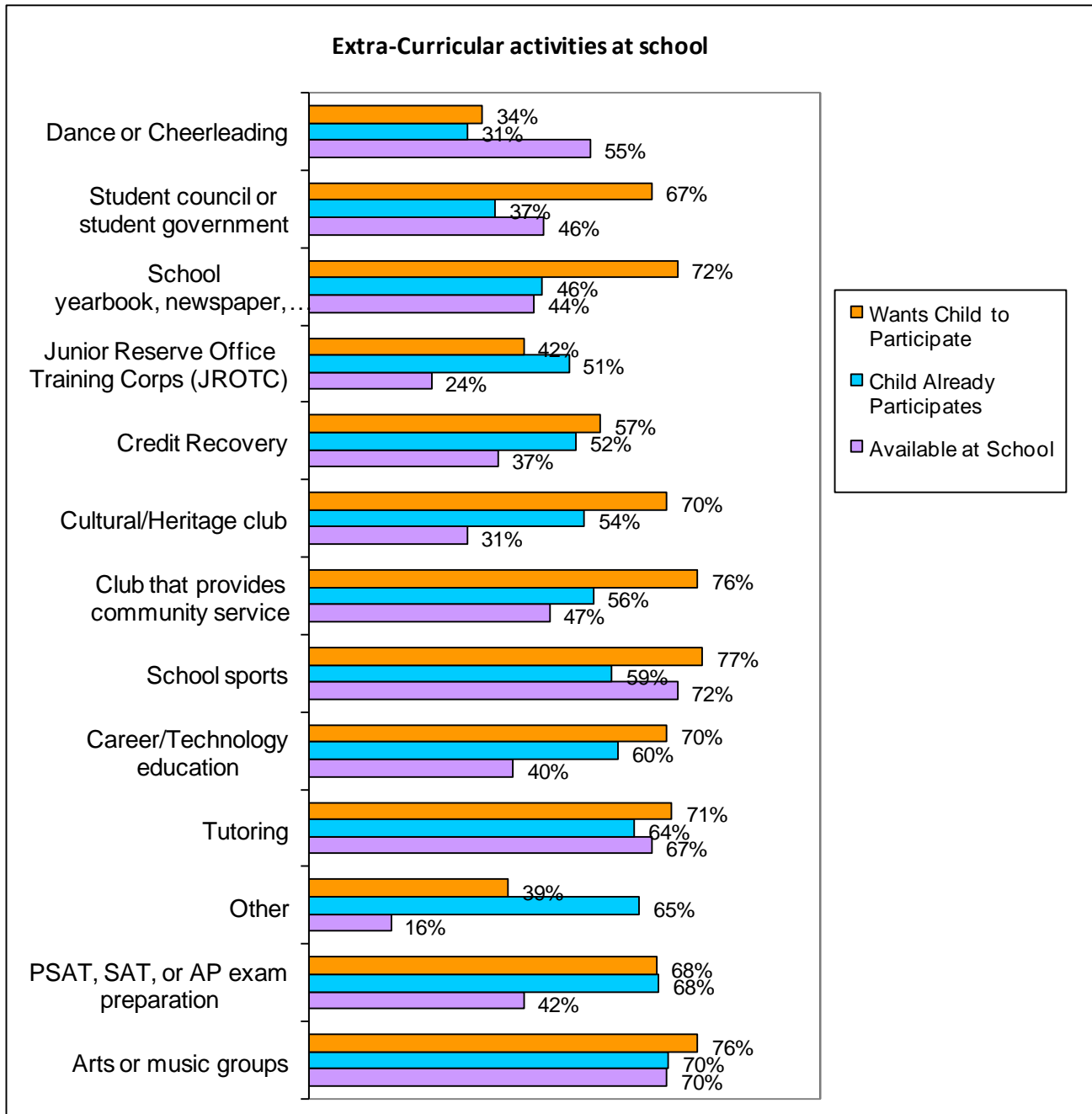


There was general agreement that the school makes student learning its #1 priority (84%) and provides extra help when children need it (74%). Parents are also confident their children will graduate from high school (96%), attend college (92%), and are being well-prepared for success (79%).



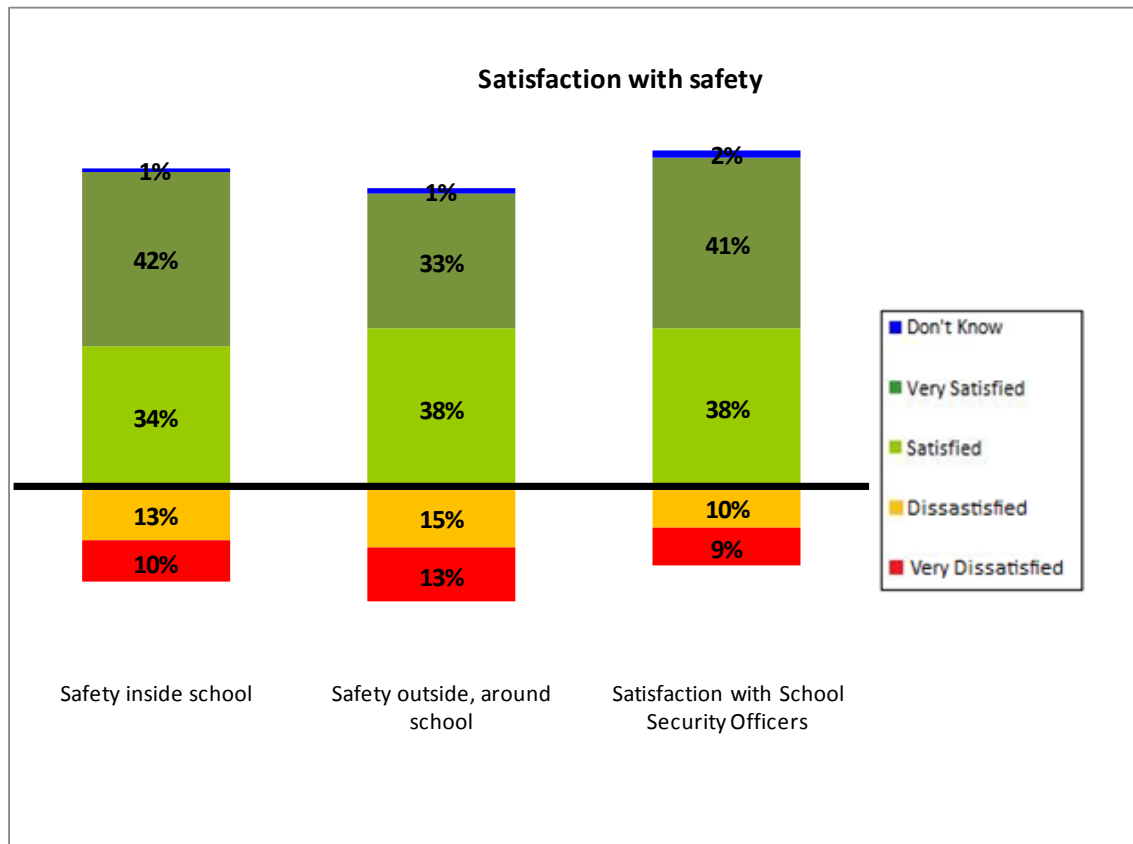
## Activities for Students

The survey included questions about the type of extracurricular activities available in schools. For those activities available, respondents were asked if their children participated, if they did not, respondents were asked if they would like their children to participate. *Arts or Music Groups* (70%) and *Exam Prep* (68%) were the activities most joined.

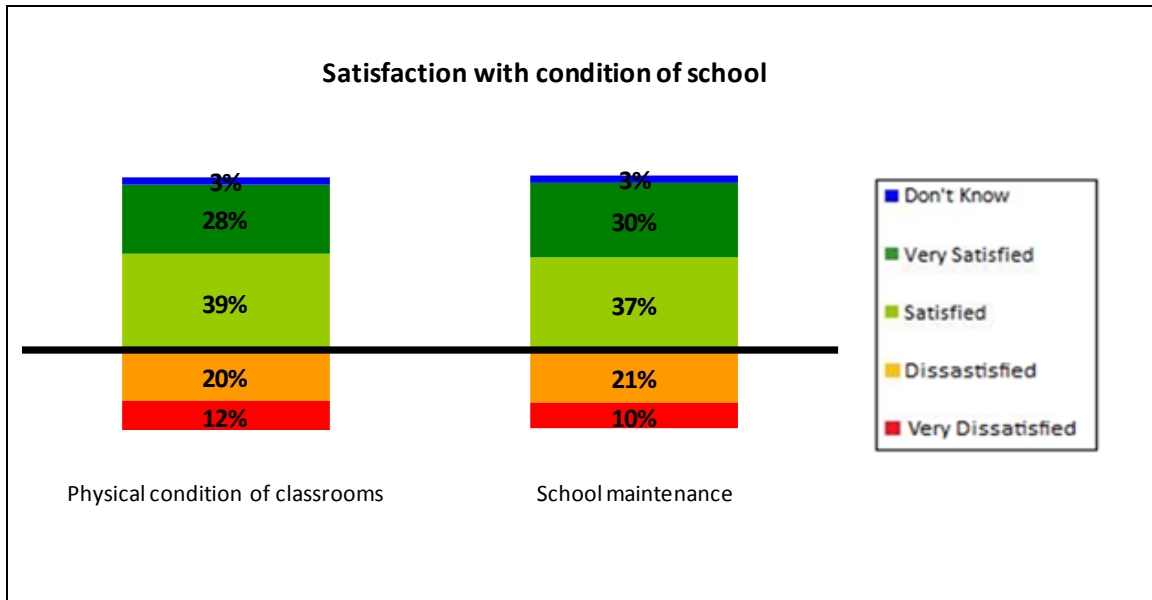


## Safe and Effective Learning Environment

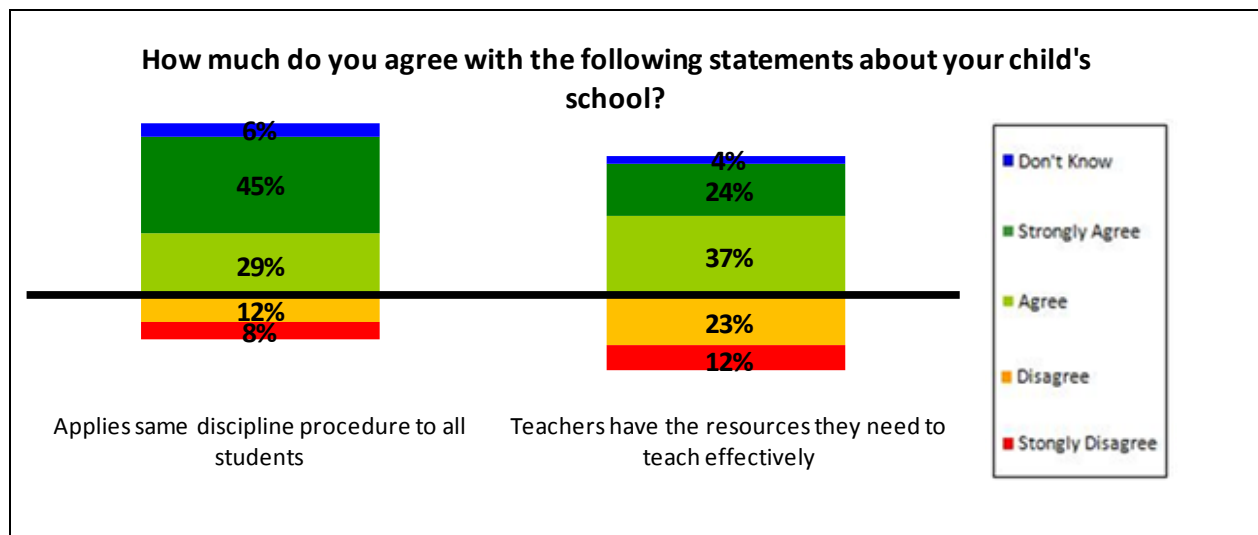
In terms of school safety, the majority of parents are satisfied with the safety of their child(ren)'s school. Parents are quite satisfied with the safety outside, around the school and nearly 80% of parents report feeling satisfied with the safety inside the school building.



Respondents were also satisfied with the physical conditions of classrooms and the maintenance of the school.

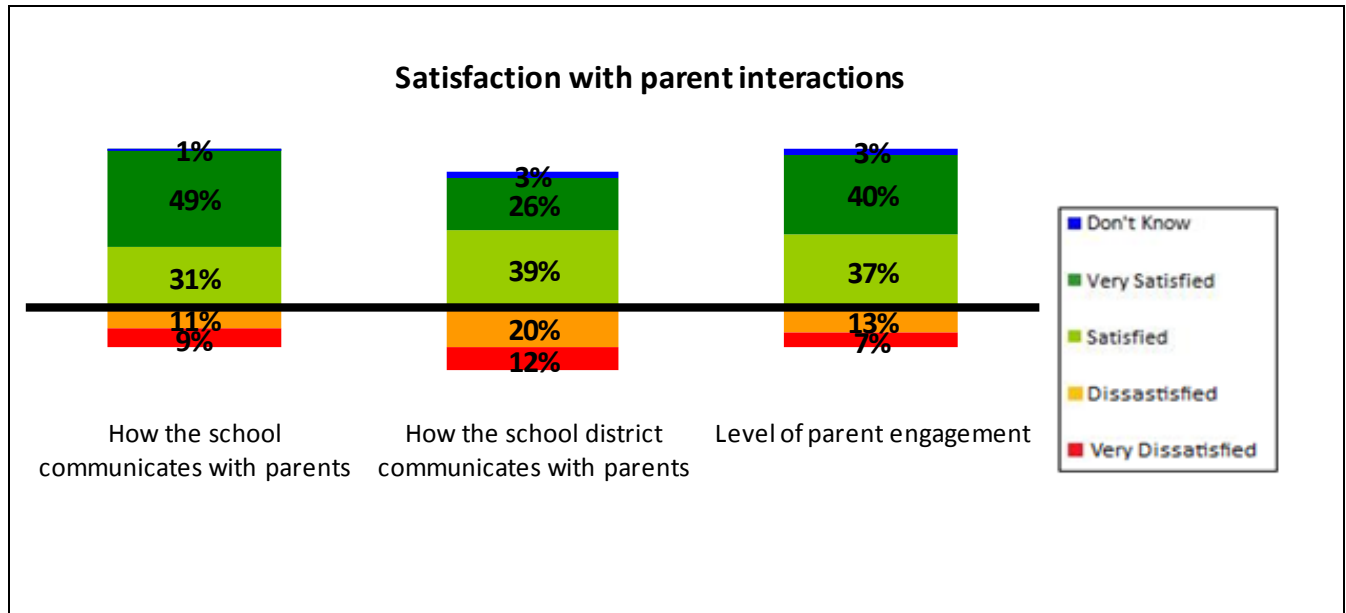


Resources (funding, staff, materials, and time) are allocated with a specific focus on instructional improvement and increasing student achievement. Parents generally agreed that teachers have access to teaching resources (61%). Respondents also agree that discipline procedures are applied consistently to all students (74%).



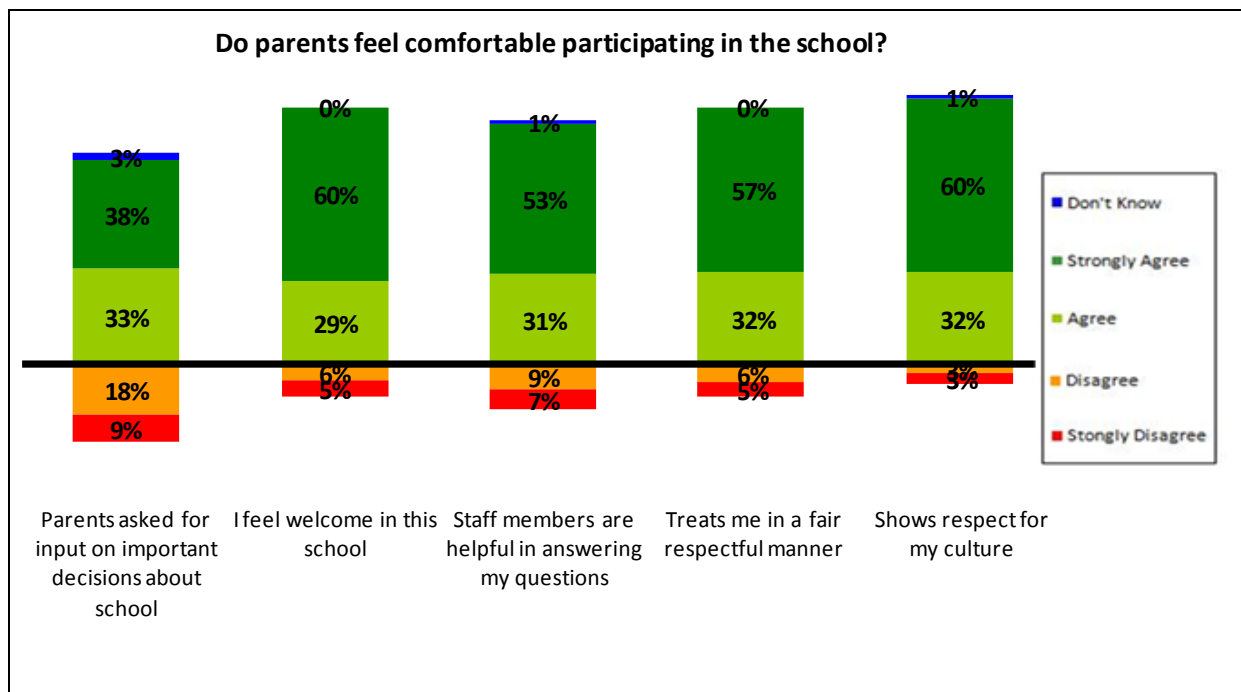
## Family and Community Engagement

Respondents report being moderately satisfied with the way in which the school and the district communicate (80%, 65%) and engage with parents (77%).

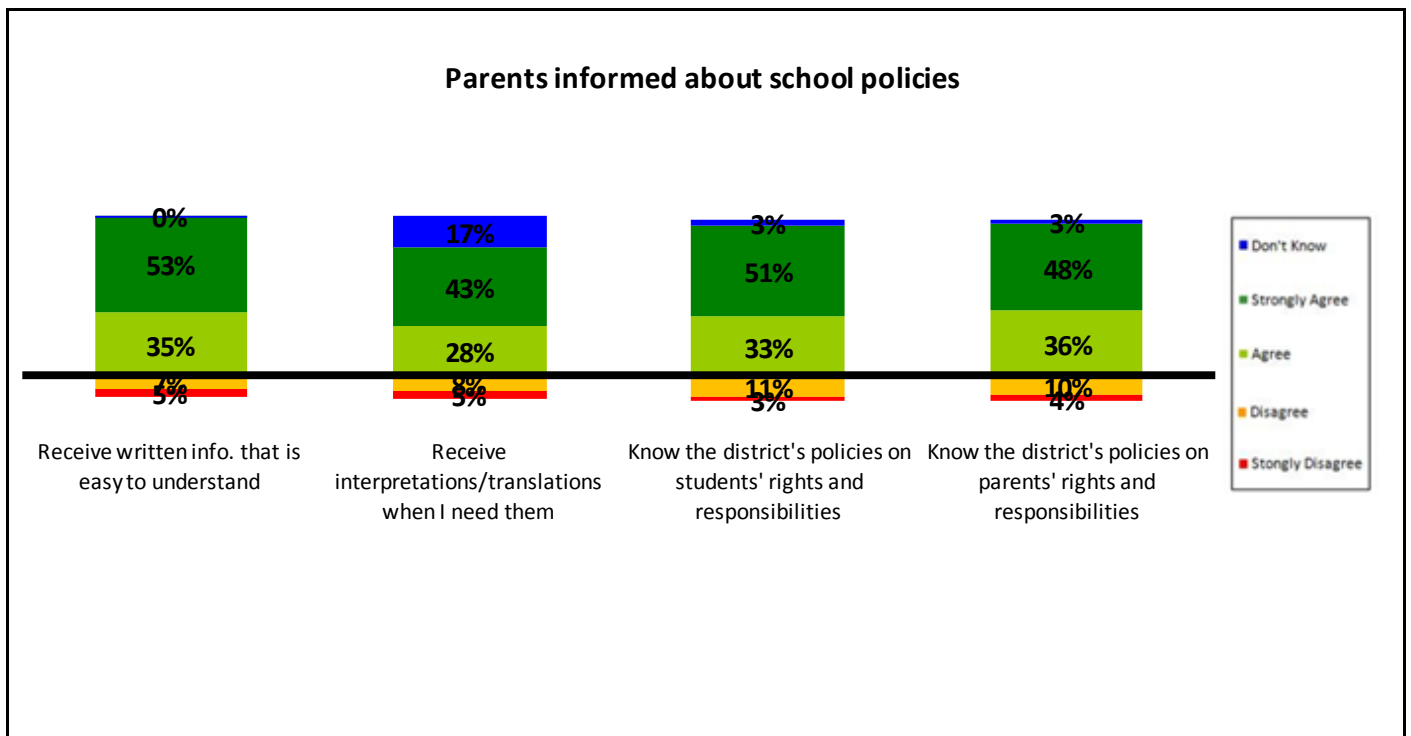
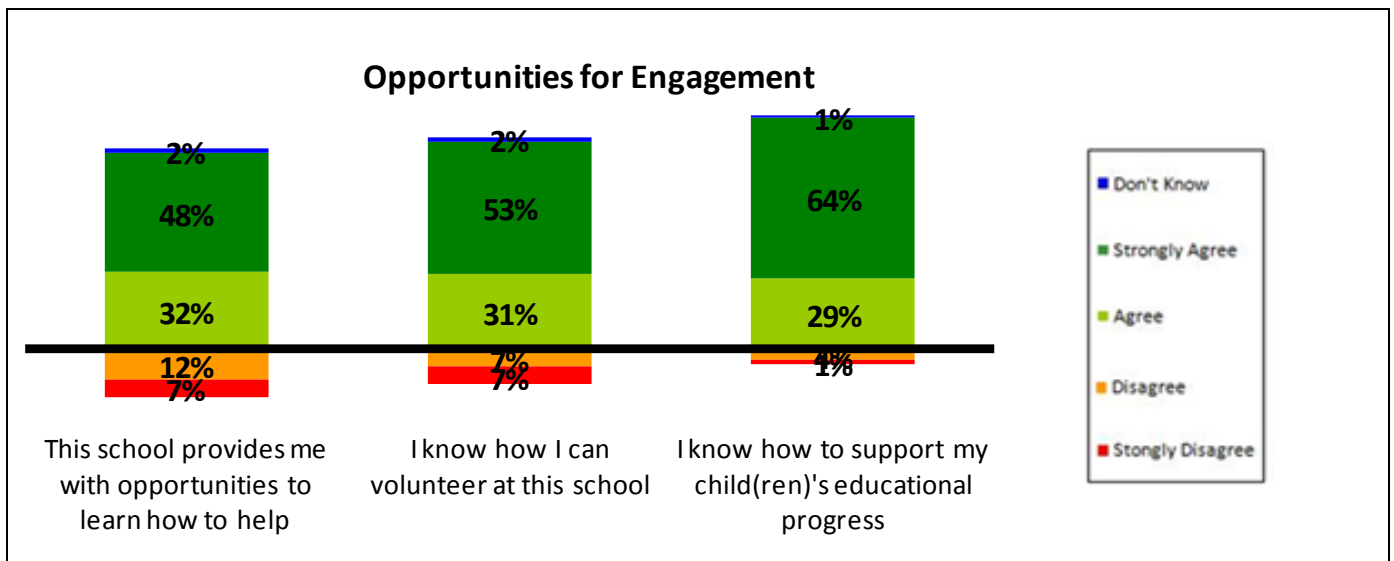


### Levels of Communication with Parents

Results also indicate that parents felt respected (89%) and welcome at schools (89%), were regularly contacted by schools and were generally kept well informed.

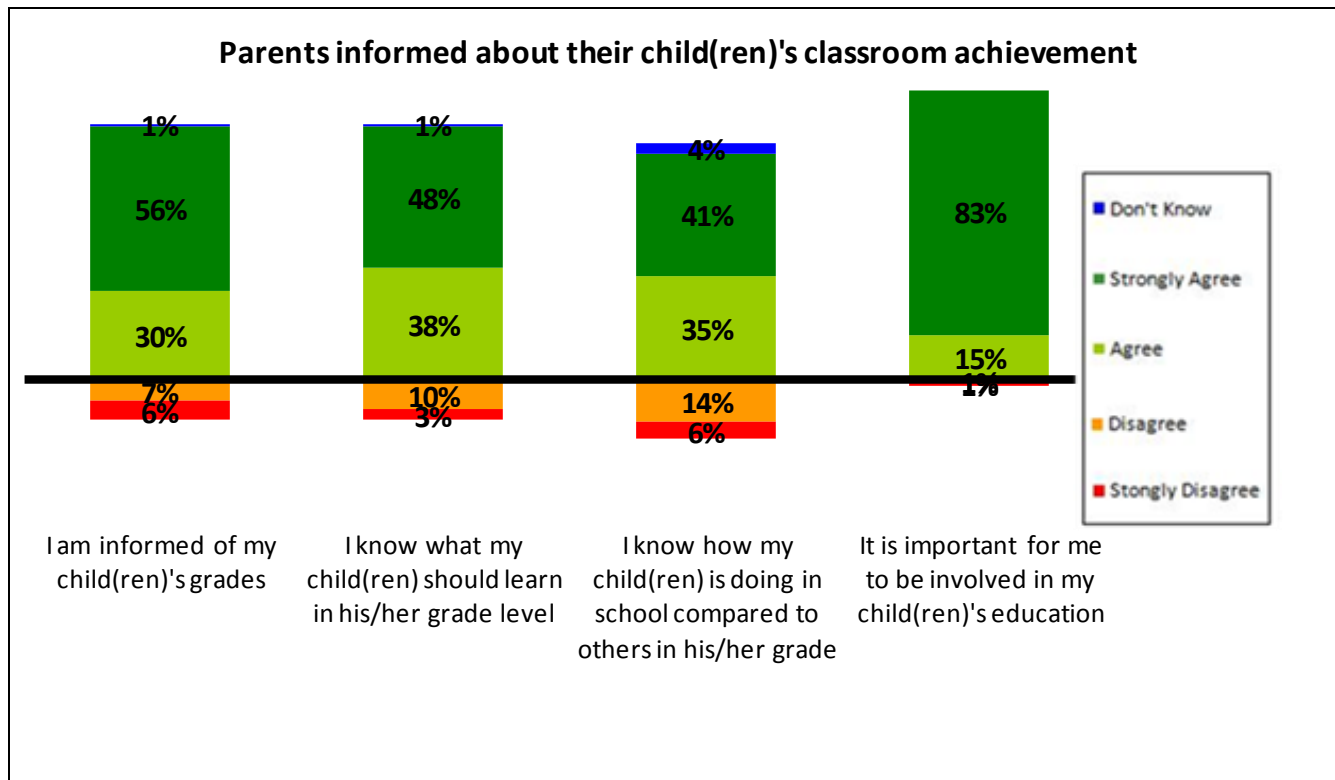
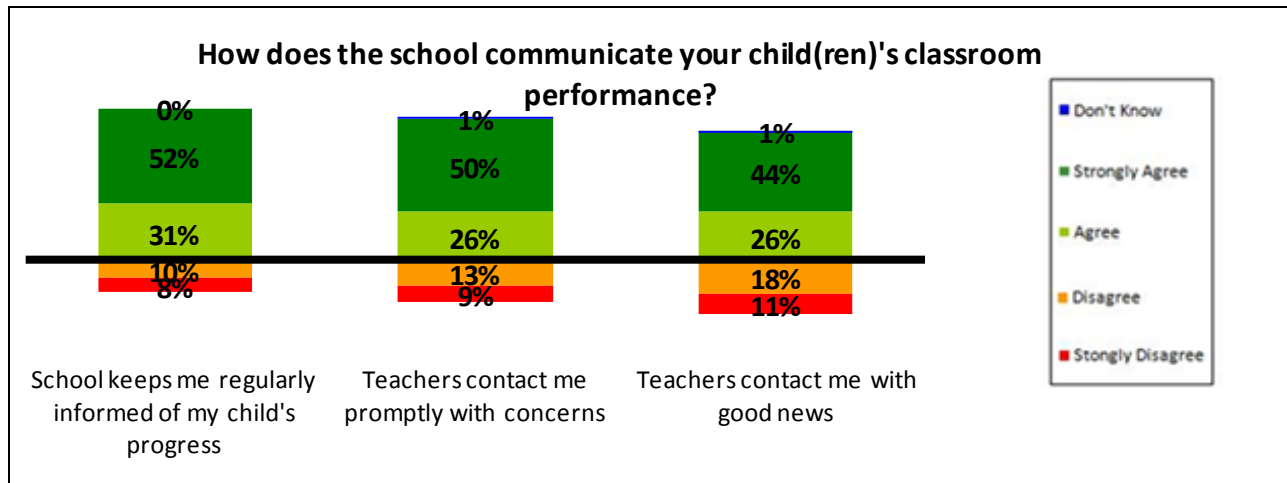


A majority of parents also noted that the schools have helped them support their child(ren)'s education both at home and school.



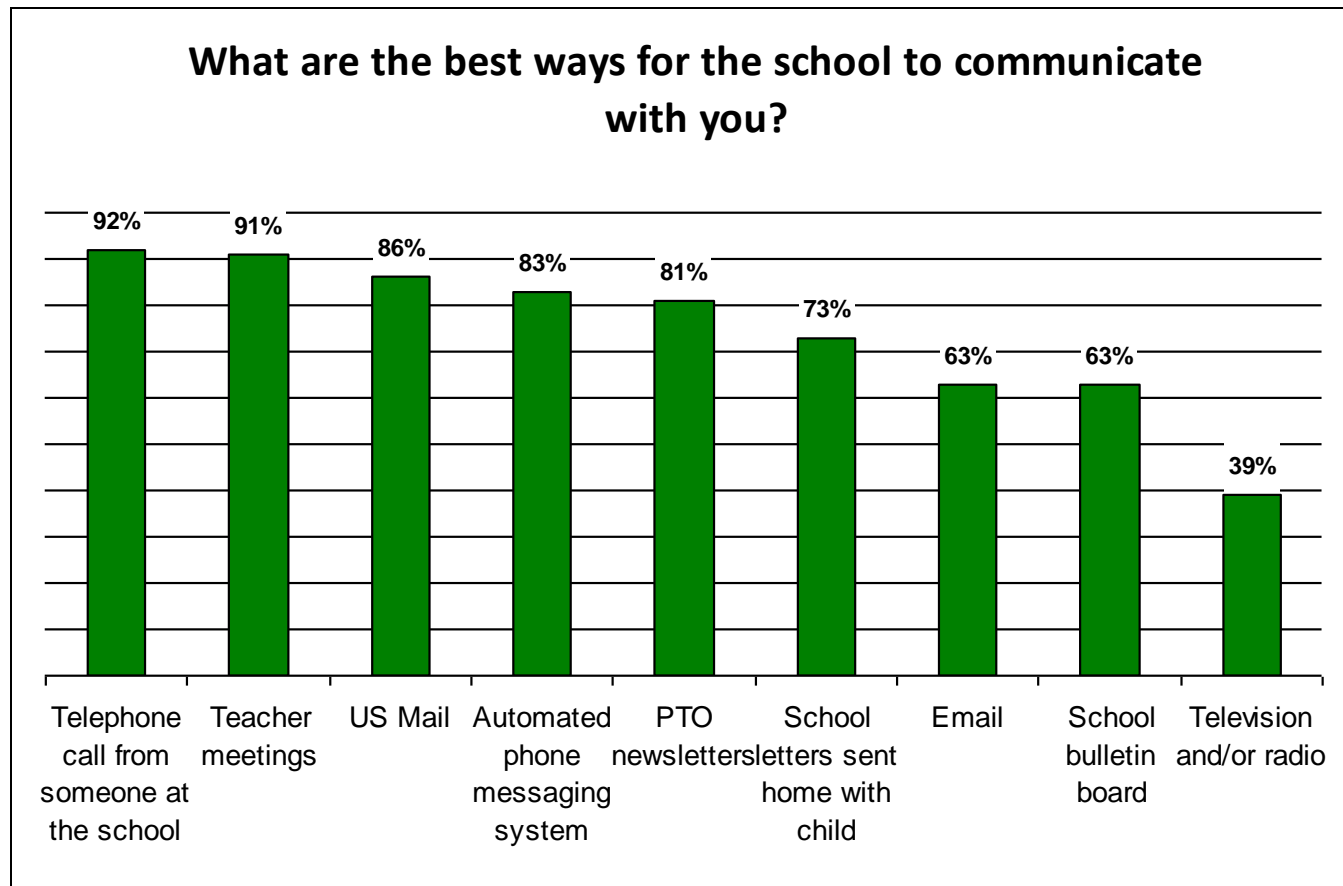
## How Well Are Parents Informed of Student Progress

Over 75% of parents/guardians strongly agreed that it was important that they be involved in their child(ren)'s education, knew what their children should be learning and were informed of their children's grades.



## Contacting Parents

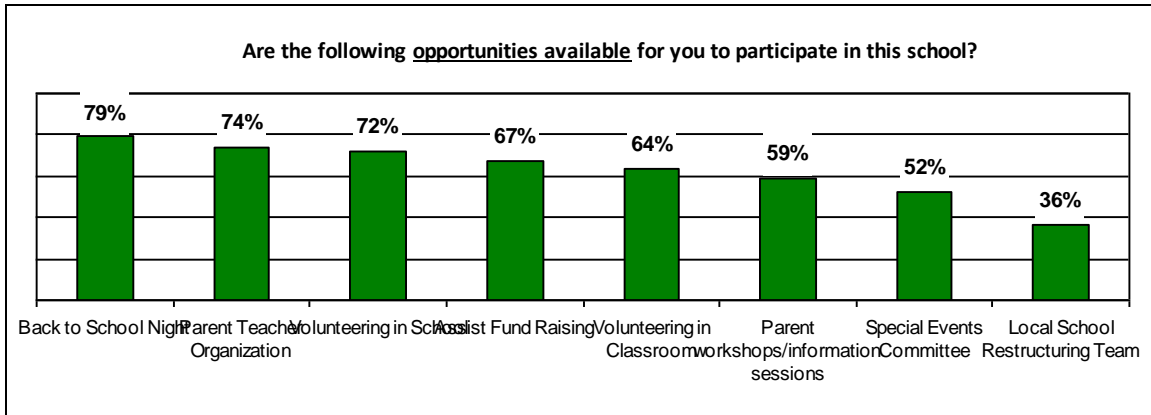
Parents indicated the best way for schools to communicate with them are a phone call home (92%), teacher meeting (91%), and mailed letter (86%).



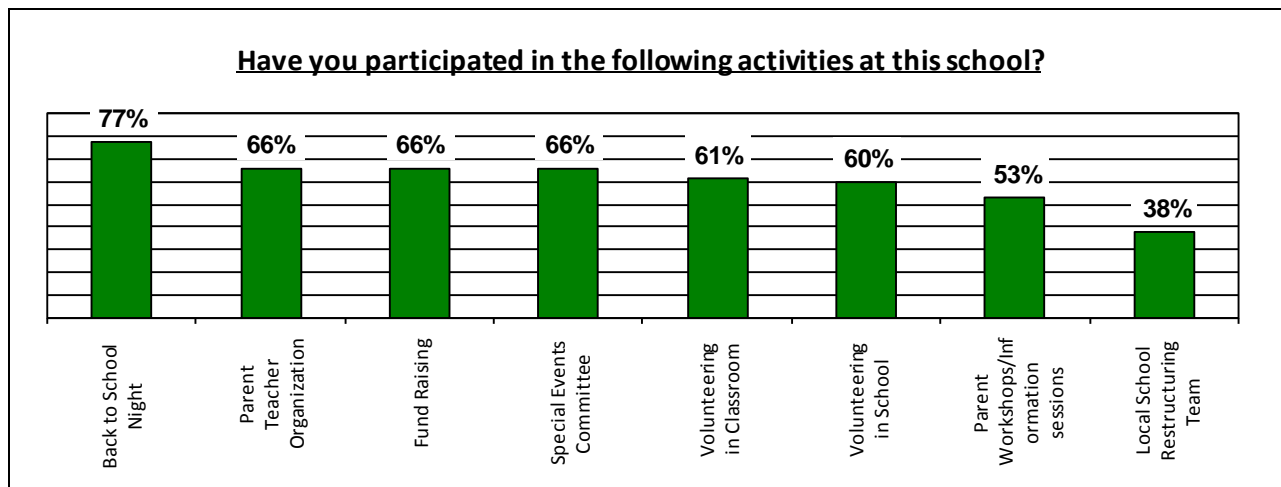


## Opportunities for Parental Participation

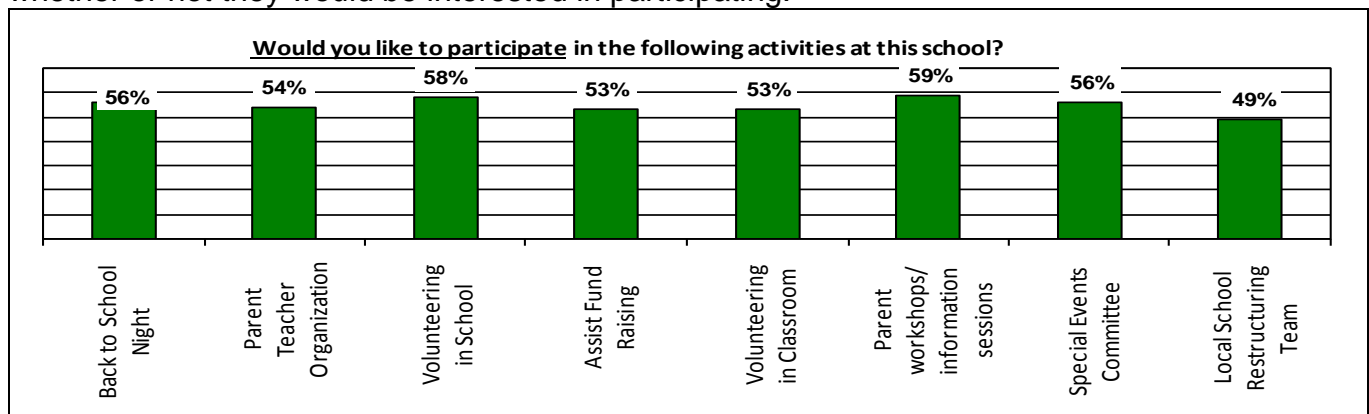
Most parents reported there are several opportunities to participate in the school, a majority of parents/guardians have participated in one form or another and many more would like to participate in the schools.



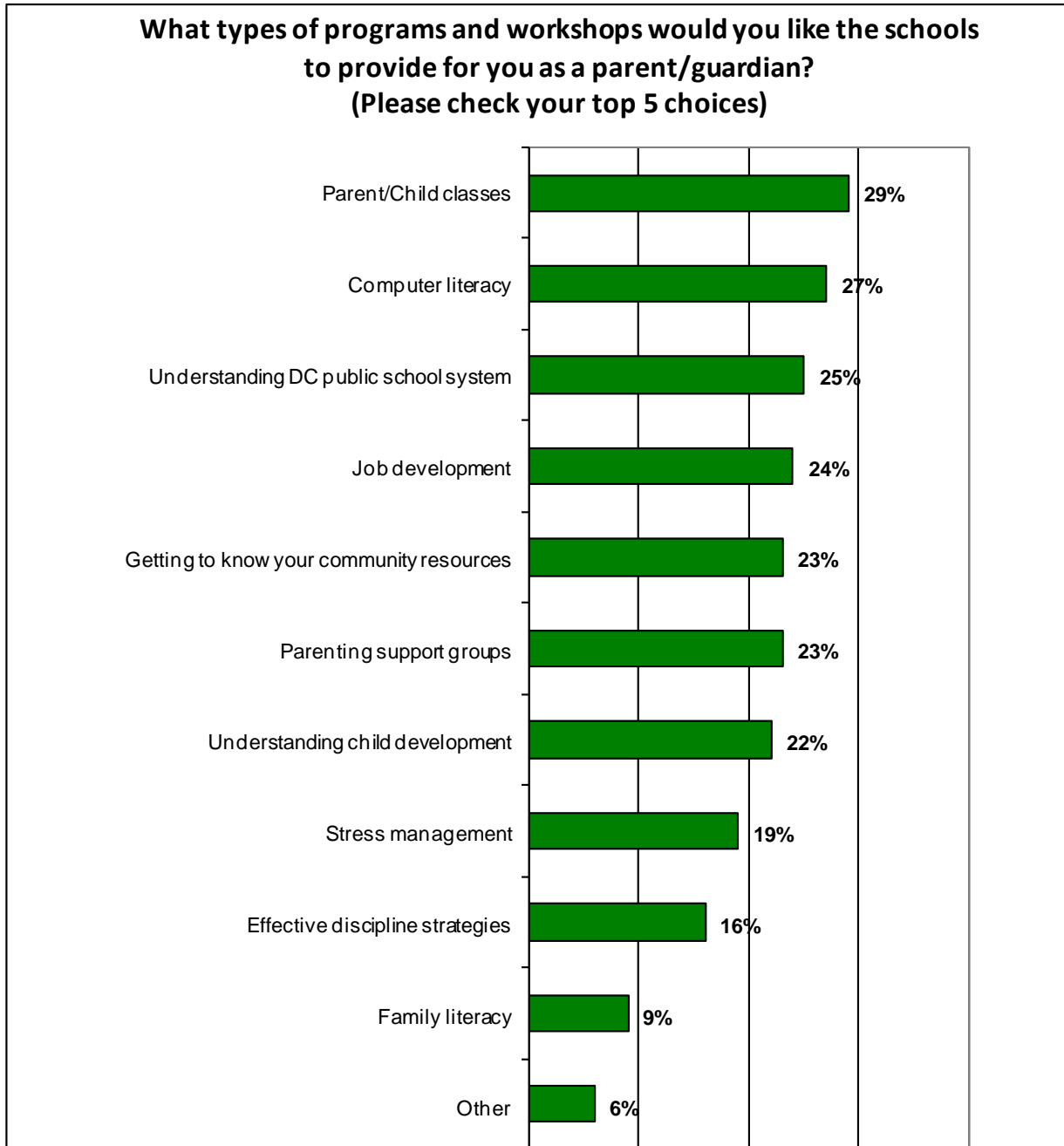
Parents/guardians most commonly report participating in *Back to School Nights*, *Parent Teacher Organizations*, and *fundraising*.



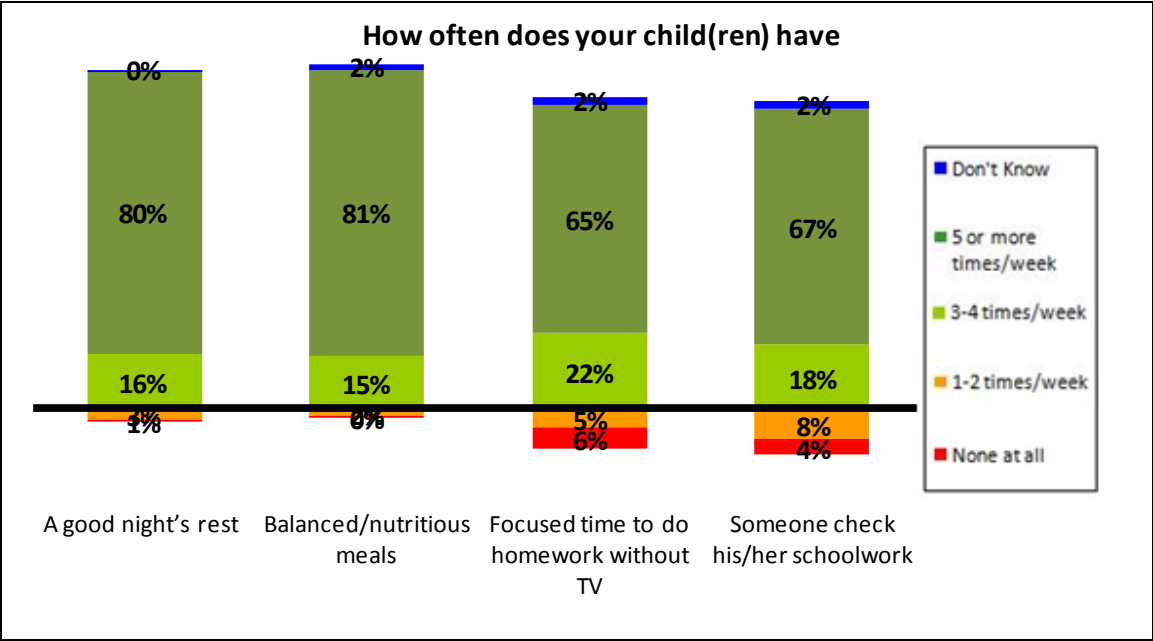
Parents who reported the activities were not available or they had not participated indicated whether or not they would be interested in participating.



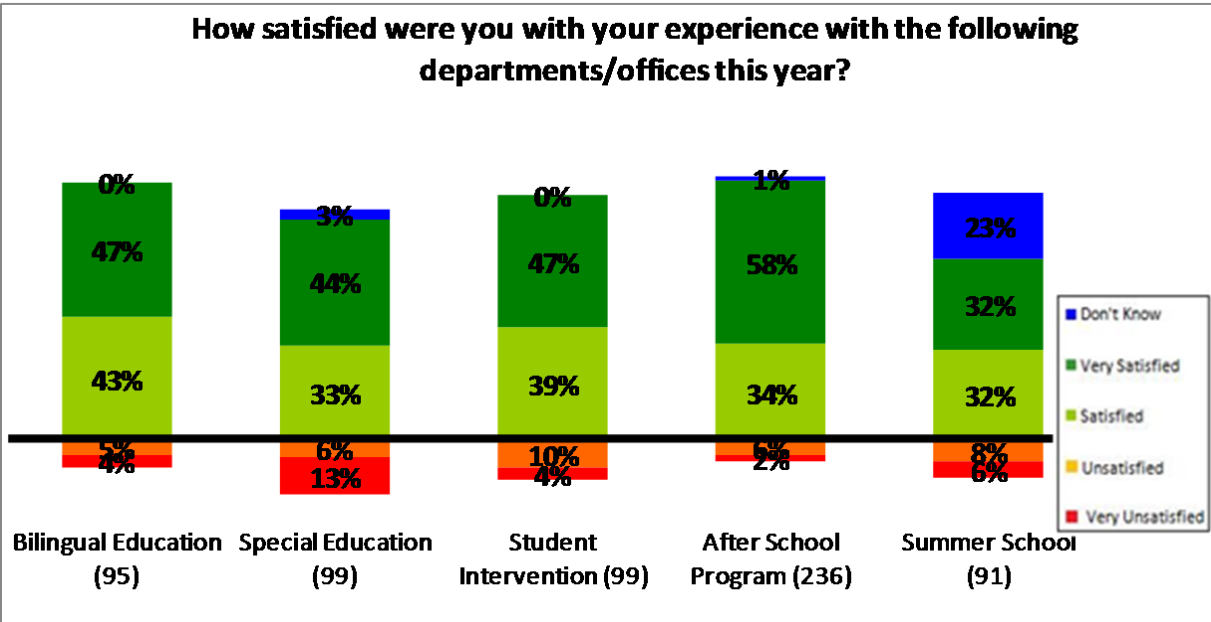
Parents/guardians were asked about the types of programs and workshops they would like schools to provide specifically for them. Respondents were asked to select their top five programs. The most commonly selected programs were parent/child classes, computer literacy and programs that help parents/guardians understand the DC public school system.



Respondents reported that the majority of children do get a good night’s rest (96%), nutritious meals (96%), time for homework without TV (87%), and a homework check (85%) each day.



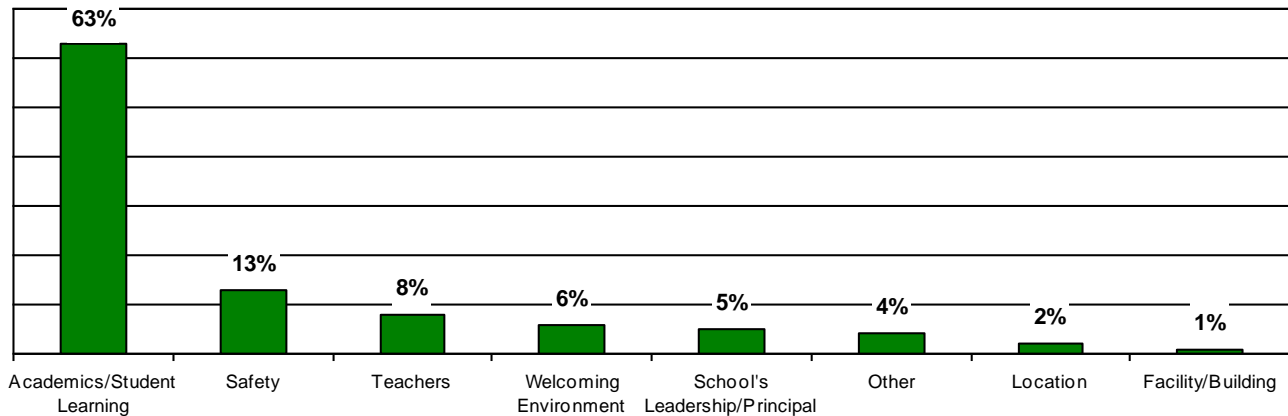
Respondents were also asked if their children had participated in special programs. Most had not, but those who had, reported their satisfaction levels with the programs. Overall, parents/guardians expressed high levels of satisfaction. The after school program received the highest satisfaction ratings while special education received the lowest.



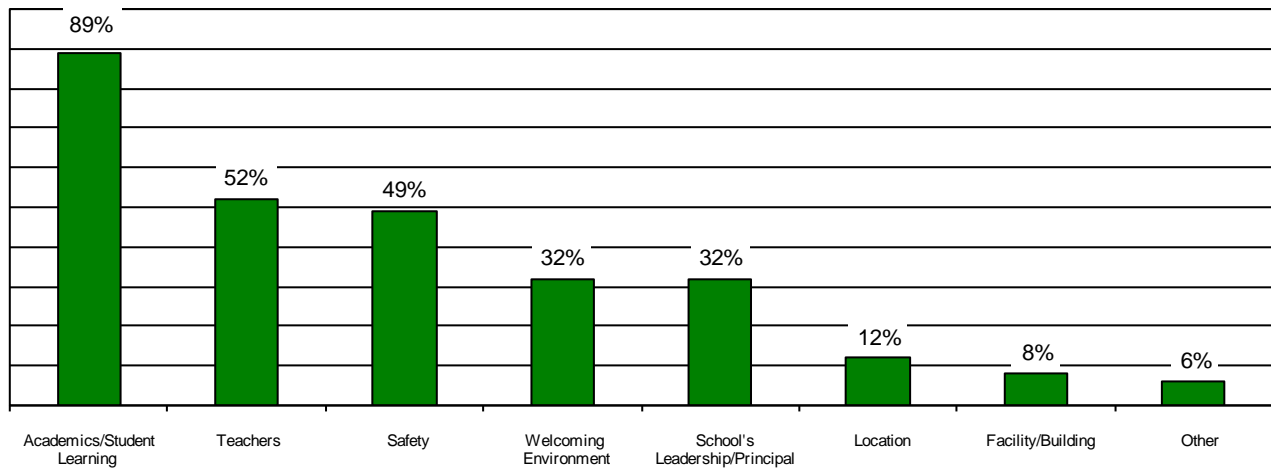
## Identification of Most Important Issues for Parents

In addition to asking specific questions regarding the school environment and programs, parents /guardians were asked to identify what aspect of their children's education is most important to them. Academics/Student Learning was overwhelmingly identified as the MOST important issue. Teachers and Safety were among the top three most important issues.

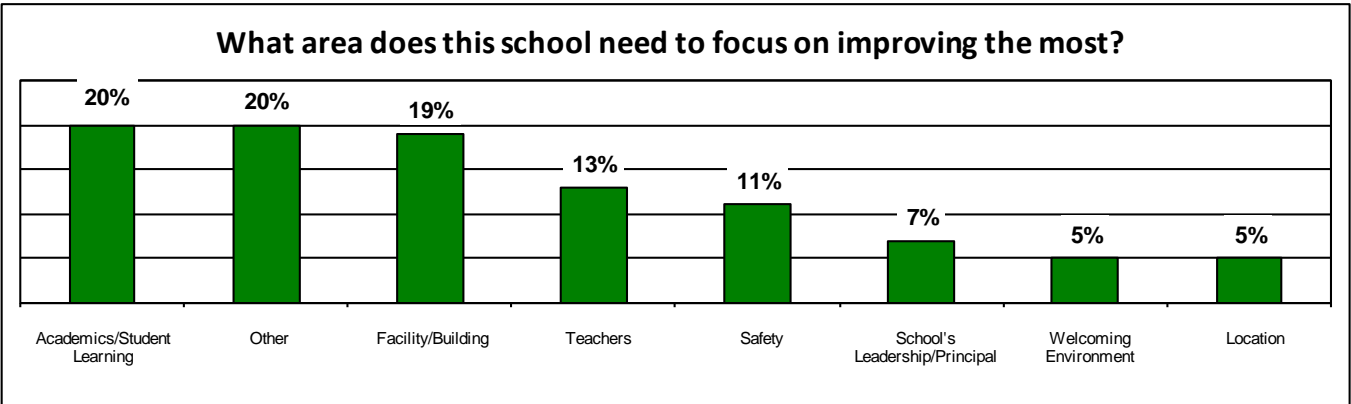
**What aspect of your child(ren)'s school is MOST important to you?**



**Among Top 3 most important issues**

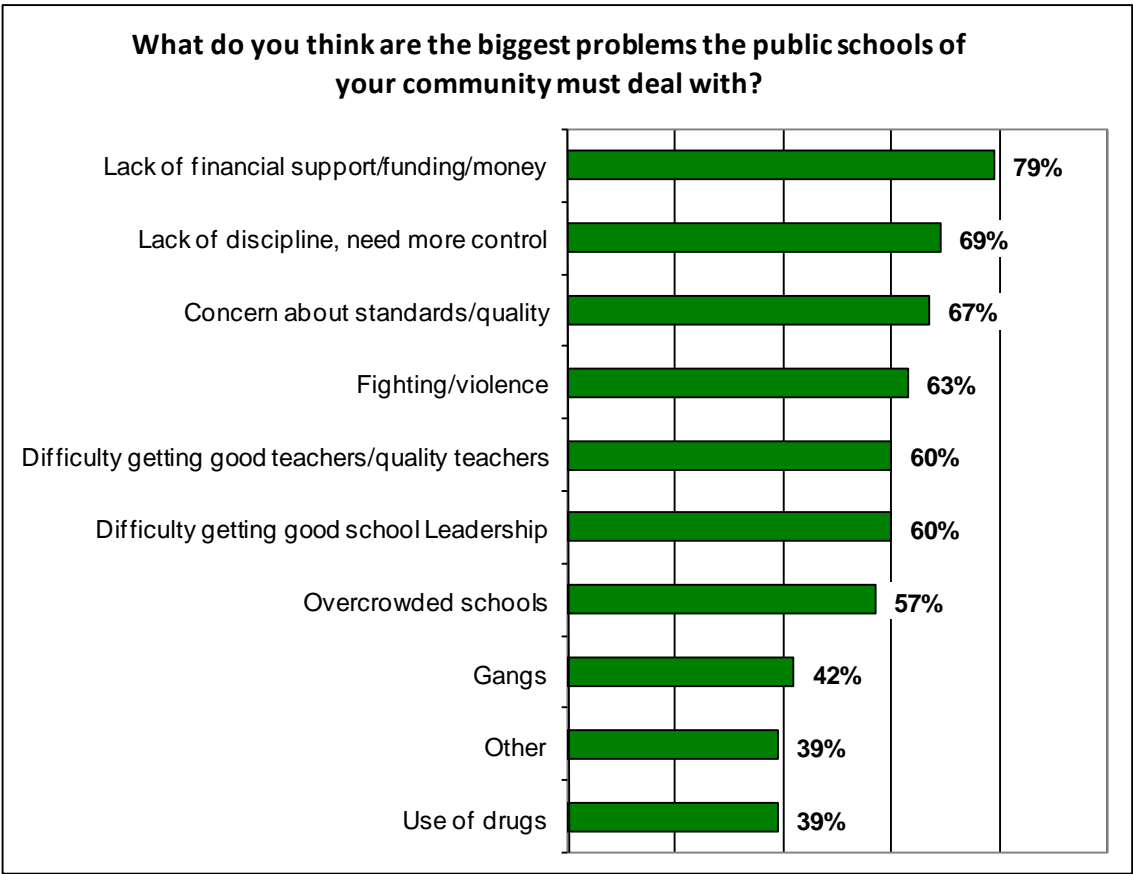


The majority of parents/guardians responded that their child’s school needs to focus on one of the following three areas: Academic/Student Learning, Facility/Building and Other areas.



**Most Frequently Cited Problems with Schools**

Parents/guardians reported the biggest problems facing public schools in their communities were *Lack of financial support/funding*, *Lack of discipline*, & *Concern about standards/quality*. They were allowed to select multiple areas.



## Appendix A

### Overview of Survey Methodology and Accuracy – DCPS Dr. Matt A. Barreto, survey consultant

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In order to implement a representative survey of parents in the D.C. Public School, Pacific Market Research, a telephone survey research firm in Renton, Washington, retained me as a survey consultant. I am a professor of Political Science at the University of Washington, and a faculty member in the Center for Statistics and Social Sciences. My research and teaching expertise is in public opinion survey research, especially in survey methodology including sample stratification and weighting.

While most random selection telephone surveys return an accurate and representative sample of the population, in some instances this is not the case, partially due to differential response rates or ineffective respondent follow-up. In order to ensure that the DCPS parent survey was accurate and representative of all parents, we created a stratified random sample on key demographic and geographic characteristics. In addition, we also instituted a policy to require a minimum of 10 follow-up calls to any phone numbers that did not respond to the first inquiry.

Within the DCPS, we stratified the sample by Ward, School Type, and Race of Students in order to maintain a reliable sample in our survey that matched the actual real characteristics of DCPS. We took account for two considerations on Ward – both the Ward of the school and the Ward that the parents live in, as many parents live in a different Ward than they send their children to school in. The stratification by Ward guarantees that parents in all reaches of the DCPS district will be included in the survey at the exact rates that they occur in the actual universe. In addition, by stratifying the sample through race and ethnicity of the students, and through school type, we further ensure the representative nature of the data gathered. Table 1 below compares the actual universe estimate for DCPS along the lines of School Ward, Residential Ward, Race and School Type to the data gathered in our survey. As is clear, the survey is a very accurate representation of the true underlying population of parents and students in DCPS.

**Table 1: Comparison of Universe (Actual) Population and Survey Results**

SCHOOL WARD	ACTUAL	SURVEY
1	27.2%	26.1%
2	6.2%	5.6%
3	4.7%	6.0%
4	9.5%	10.4%
5	14.4%	12.9%
6	8.5%	8.0%
7	12.3%	11.6%
8	17.2%	19.5%

RESIDENT WARD	ACTUAL	SURVEY
1	9.0%	7.2%
2	3.5%	3.6%
3	5.0%	7.8%
4	13.9%	15.2%
5	13.4%	14.3%
6	9.4%	10.1%
7	19.4%	18.8%
8	22.9%	23.0%

RACE	ACTUAL	SURVEY
Asian	1.7%	2.6%
Black	81.2%	80.5%
Hispanic	11.0%	10.0%
White	6.0%	6.8%

SCHOOL TYPE	ACTUAL	SURVEY
Elementary	53.5%	51.4%
Middle	12.1%	12.4%
High	27.5%	28.5%
Ed Centers	4.6%	5.4%
Unspecified	1.9%	2.4%